

Big Question in Washington: Can Nothing Be Kept Secret?

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WASHINGTON — Washington is in turmoil over the latest top-level leak of secret documents — a turmoil rivaling that of the Pentagon papers last June.

This time the columnist, Jack Anderson, heir to the mantle of Drew Pearson, has obtained a bevy of secret documents on the India-Pakistan war highly embarrassing to the Nixon Administration.

These documents are not years old, as were the Pentagon papers. They are a month old — current events.

THEY ARE not guesses by low-level officials about what happened at higher levels in creating the Vietnam war. They are actual records of top-level meetings under auspices of the National Security Council.

For the second time in just a few weeks, Henry Kissinger — the President's top national security adviser — has found remarks he meant to be secret plastered all over the nation's front pages, with his name attached.

A few weeks ago he found himself exposed as the source of a White House "leak" that President Nixon might cancel a summit meeting to the Soviet Union in anger over Soviet support of India.

Now he finds himself quot-

ed as secretly telling top officials that President Nixon wanted to "tilt" in favor of Pakistan — while the administration was publicly claiming neutrality.

KISSINGER must tremble nowadays every time he picks up a newspaper, wondering what he'll be reading about himself next.

People around the country must be wondering what's happening in Washington — and why?

They must be asking themselves: Can't anything be kept secret in Washington anymore?

What happened, essentially, was this:

President Nixon decided on his own that he wanted to

to carry out policies in which they did not believe.

From the beginning, most of the State Department experts were pro-Indian in the dispute. They believed the U.S. should have taken strong steps to censure Pakistan for repressive attacks in East Pakistan beginning last March.

When men in Washington are asked to execute policies in which they do not believe — and particularly when no effort is made to convert them — leaks to the press, as a way of fighting back, are almost inevitable.

NEWS OF what is said in secret meetings becomes a weapon that the bureaucracy can use to fight back.

What happened with the Anderson papers was that someone at a very high level of the government got fed up with Nixon or Kissinger — or both — and decided to blow the whistle.

The papers apparently were leaked to embarrass Kissinger and Nixon — and to expose differences between what was said publicly, and what was said privately, in the early stages of the war.

A fascinating aspect of the situation now is the government's obvious lack of ardor in pursuing an investigation of the Anderson leaks.

There is every possibility that the Nixon Administration either knows who did it already, and doesn't want to pursue the matter publicly — or that it simply doesn't want to know for fear of embarrassment.

ANDERSON HAS said that "if the sources were identified, it would embarrass the administration more than it

would me. It would make a very funny story."

That is probably true.

It is one thing to indict a Daniel Ellsberg, in the Pentagon papers case, who is an outspoken foe of the administration, and who has admitted responsibility for getting the Pentagon papers into print.

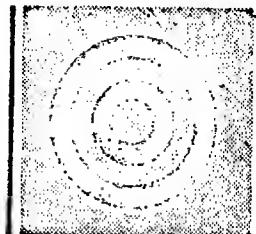
It is quite another to take on a top level, dissident official in your own official family and run the risk that he'll get angry and spill still more secrets on sensitive matters.

Justice Department officials say the "national security" has not been threatened by the Anderson leaks, as it was by publication of the Pentagon papers.

THAT IS like saying that classified records of policy-making meetings held under auspices of the National Security Council aren't likely to involve the "national security."

In fact, leaks at that level — on current matters — could jeopardize the "national security" overnight.

The idea that practically no meeting can be held in secret in Washington must be giving Kissinger and Nixon sleepless nights.



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present a "pro-Pakistan" image in the India-Pakistan confrontation.

But, as the Anderson papers show clearly, he never took the trouble to explain his reasoning to the bureaucracy.

AS NEARLY as can be ascertained, he made no effort to try to "sell" his case to the men who would have to execute the policies.

State Department policy-makers found themselves receiving White House orders